Science and technology needed to help feed growing population

27 November 2013 - Urgent action is needed to develop the new technologies that will help provide enough food for a growing population, Environment Minister Lord de Mauley said today.

The Minister met with leading figures from the worlds of science, farming and food at the Science Museum in London to debate how the Government's £160million investment in a new Agricultural-Technologies strategy should be used to respond to the growing challenges of world food security.

The Food for Thought event has been convened jointly by the Science Museum, Defra and the Met Office. It will consider how a £70million government 'catalyst' can be used by businesses and academics to develop innovative new technologies and bring them to the market, such as recent innovations of cancer-fighting broccoli or GPS guided tractors.

Environment Minister Lord De Mauley said:

"Agri-technologies have the potential to transform food production in Britain.

"Demand for food is rising rapidly and time is not on our side. We have a world class science and technology sector. Breakthroughs in nutrition, genetics, and precision farming mean the sector is one of the world's fastest growing and exciting markets. Now we need to ensure this innovation is converted into practical tools that deliver in the field.

"The government is investing millions of pounds into making this a reality. The challenge for the business and research community now is to identify where investment can best help us meet the challenges of growing more food in a sustainable way and help our agricultural industry compete in the global race."

With the planet's population due to hit 9 billion by 2050, it's estimated that we will need a 70% global increase in food production by 2050.

The Agri-Tech Strategy champions the role our science and technology industry can play in the global race to increase food production, improve the environment, minimise waste and boost competition.

Ian Blatchford Director of the Science Museum said:

"Science holds the key to meeting the global challenge of feeding a growing population in a sustainable way. We're delighted to be bringing together the scientists, policy makers and industry experts who will keep the UK at the forefront of innovation in agri-technology over the next decade."'

Phil Evans Government Services Director at the Met Office said:

"Weather has a real impact on farming and climate change will increase future pressure on production. The Met Office has a long history of translating its science to provide services to decision making. We hope this established expertise can be used to help the agricultural industry become more resilient."

Those joining Lord de Mauley at the event today include SesVanderhave UK Ltd, Bayer Crops Science, Which, Royal Agricultural University and the National Farmers Union.

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